



## Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

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**AGENDA DATE:** September 1, 2010

**TO:** Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

**FROM:** Front Country Trails Task Force Staff

**SUBJECT:** **FCT Funding Strategy**

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Front Country Trails (FCT) Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force receives a report and provides comments on the draft FCT Funding Strategy and Matrix.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The purpose of this staff report is to discuss a preliminary approach for a comprehensive funding strategy for the maintenance and management of the front country trails. The strategy will be refined and updated as the management plan develops, and to address annual program funding needs and priorities.

#### Background

No single government agency or nonprofit organization has the ability to provide all the resources necessary to manage and maintain the FCT. The FCT program is specifically organized to coordinate the resources of multiple government agencies, nonprofit groups and the general public. This structure allows FCT to raise money from a broad support base and to apply the funds based on community priorities. Fundraising for the trails can be undertaken by both public agencies and nonprofit organizations. In addition, depending on the community priorities, funds raised by public agencies can be used to support the work of nonprofit trails organizations and trail advocates.

#### Goals

1. Establish secure funding for the management and maintenance of the Front Country Trails.
2. Provide a framework to support and enhance community fundraising.

### Objectives

1. Maximize government grant potential:
  - Organize community agencies, nonprofits and resources to create the best potential for successful grant applications
2. Create partnerships with the business community:
  - Work with the business community to garner financial, volunteer and in-kind support for trail maintenance, tools and special projects
3. Maximize individual donations:
  - Small donations from a broad base are more useful when pooled together to support community projects and goals
4. Raise the profile of FCT to support fundraising by other trails groups:
  - As the message about FCT reaches a broader audience, any group that raises money for the trails will benefit from community awareness of the issues

### Mechanisms

All three agencies have the ability to accept and manage grant funds and private donations. Grant funds awarded from federal and state government sources are assigned to specific project accounts within each agency's budget. Grants from nonprofit foundations or private individuals are managed through non-profit foundations, such as the Los Padres Forest Association (LPFA), County Parks Foundation, and the Parks and Recreation Community Foundation (PARC).

For the purposes of the Front Country Trails Program, the County Parks Foundation would serve as the primary 501(c)(3) nonprofit to collect private donations and nongovernmental grants earmarked for the FCT projects (it would not preclude any fundraising undertaken by LPFA or others). The County Parks Foundation is a county-wide broad based foundation that is already organized to support specific parks and projects through a "friends of" structure.

As an example, donations collected under the FCT Trails Stars program would be managed by the County Parks Foundation. This program is designed to both increase the base of volunteer trail workers and provide a vehicle for bringing in business and individual donations. This program educates the public about the need to support the trails and gives supporters options for trail work and/or financial donations.

### Funding Needs and Sources

As outlined in the matrix included as Attachment 1, funding needs for the FCT fall into six general categories.

1. Program Management. Annual program management and administration expenses include staff time for the FCT Coordinator and staff from all three agencies. Additional costs include supplies and training. Under the 2009 Challenge Cost Share Agreement, three agencies committed a collective \$30,000/year (\$10,000/each) for program administration. All three agencies also provide in-kind support with staff resources, office space, equipment, and funds for special projects, such as trail etiquette signage.

Since grants and private donations will not fund program management, an ongoing commitment of public funds will be necessary to maintain the program.

2. Community Outreach. The mission and message of FCT is fairly new and requires significant community outreach. Costs include printing, website hosting and development, community booths and events, and radio/TV/print media.

Public agency commitments are the most likely source of funds for many of these efforts. Private donations and in-kind support might be secured for special projects.

3. Trail Management Planning. In order to accomplish a comprehensive community based trail management planning process, data collection is needed on various levels. This includes physical characteristics of the trails, user experiences on the trails, user numbers and types of use, community needs and expectations for the trails.

Data collection and surveys are difficult to fund with grants unless part of a new trail development or trail expansion program. To move trail management planning forward, the three agencies would need to identify internal funding sources.

4. Trail Maintenance. For many years, maintenance of the front country trails has been supported by volunteers. Public funds are available on occasion to support special trail maintenance and improvement projects. These funds are often available in response to disasters, such as fire or storm events. Some areas of the FCT system can continue to be maintained effectively through volunteer work organized by trails organizations or agency staff within certain constraints. However, funding for contracted trail maintenance services would protect against volunteer burn-out, and support some of the more difficult to reach areas of trails.

Although public agencies may be better able to support trail maintenance in the future, private donations will be needed to support maintenance efforts in the short term. Funding could either be secured by the FCT agencies (through the Trail Stars program) or by local trails advocates and organizations. The success of the Montecito Trails Foundation illustrates that private funding can be secured for trails maintenance.

5. Trail Reconstruction. Trail reconstruction projects represent a significant undertaking that requires dedicated funding. Each major trail project would have a budget that is based on the scope and challenges of the project. The budget would include costs for project management, professional trail design/engineering services, land surveys, environmental review and permitting, and construction.

It is unlikely that public agencies will be able to fund major trail reconstruction projects for the foreseeable future. While there are a few federal government grant programs for new trail development and reconstruction, the funding is limited and highly competitive. In addition, grant applications cannot be submitted until the trail planning and permitting is complete. As a result, major projects will depend on a combination of funding sources including grants and private donations. In the short-term nonprofit trails organizations may be most likely to secure private funding for trail reconstruction projects.

6. Special Projects. From time to time, needs arise for equipment, training or special projects. Examples include bike trailers to carry equipment up trails, back packs for youth volunteers, and bike bells.

Funding for special projects can come from a number of sources, including agency budgets, private donations, and small grants. The agencies have funded recent special projects such as the game cameras. Currently, the bike bells are entirely funded through the private donations of Paul Herning and Dorothy Littlejohn. There are many other examples of private and in-kind donations for special projects that have benefited the front country trails. Funding for projects can continue to be secured by both public agencies and trails organizations/advocates. Trail Stars could be an avenue for future projects.

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**ATTACHMENT:** Funding Matrix